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RAILS & PORTS

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A weekly trade newsletter.

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Phyllis Johnson-Ball
Surface Transportation Board
1925 K Street NW
Washington, DC 20423

Attention: Finance Docket Non. 34797

Dear Ms. Ball:

This submission addresses New England Transrail's (NET) proposal to develop a rail facility in Wilmington and Woburn, Massachusetts.

My background: I write a weekly trade newsletter covering the freight railroads and ports in New England and Atlantic Canada. I founded the newsletter because I wanted to support railroads as a far more environmentally-favorable mode of transportation, as opposed to trucks. As I have done this for twelve years, I have come to some (certainly not a complete) understanding of the problems and opportunities for rail in the region.

Need for railroads and NET contribution

In New England, in contrast to other regions of the country, rail's share of the transportation market is shrinking. Guilford Rail System (GRS), the regional railroad which would interchange with NET, in particular is losing traffic. The more traffic generated over the line which GRS needs to use to interchange with NET, the better, as that will also provide better service to other customers on the line.

In turn of course, that means that those customers will use more rail, and that in turn will provide clear environmental benefits, above and beyond the number of trucks NET itself will take off the road.

The long view

To aid the environment most, we need to take the long view, and know that the supply of fossil fuel is ending. How will we move goods then? By electricity. But trucks cannot operate over long distances using electricity. However, some railroads even now use electricity.

In the long view, railroads will switch much more easily to electricity than will trucks. The more we can move by rail now, the less the disruption in the future. For that reason, I urge the Section on Environmental Analysis to look at ANY use of rail as a net benefit to the environment. Rest assured, in the future we will be very grateful for the existence of rail.

Conclusion

I urge the Section on Environmental Analysis to find that NET's proposed facility and operation will not only help the environment immediately by taking trucks off the road, but will help it in the medium-term by strengthening rail service on its line, and in the long term by keeping railroads active.

Thank you for your attention.

Chop Hardenbergh